

equal access to institutions of higher education is beneficial to both the military and the students, I am also strongly opposed to policies that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, such "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." This policy has deprived the military of over 10,000 highly trained soldiers during a time of war and continues to cost the government millions of dollars in wasted training and enforcement costs. If we want to bridge the divide between the military and universities, we should, instead of passing resolutions like H. Con. Res. 354, pass H.R. 1059, the "Military Readiness Enhancement Act," which, by repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," would end the dispute over equal access for military recruiters. At the end of the day, our security is best served by giving all qualified Americans the freedom to serve our country.

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 354.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

WAIVING PASSPORT FEES FOR RELATIVES OF DECEASED MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1184) to waive the passport fees for a relative of a deceased member of the Armed Forces proceeding abroad to visit the grave of such member or to attend a funeral or memorial service for such member.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 1184

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. PASSPORT FEES.

Section 1 of the Act of June 4, 1920 (41 Stat. 750, chapter 223; 22 U.S.C. 214) is amended in the third sentence by striking "or from a widow, child, parent, brother, or sister of a deceased member of the Armed Forces proceeding abroad to visit the grave of such member" and inserting "or from a widow, widower, child, parent, grandparent, brother, or sister of a deceased member of the Armed Forces proceeding abroad to visit the grave of such member or to attend a funeral or memorial service for such member".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, S. 1184, as passed by the Senate, corrects a minor flaw in current passport law. While this flaw is minor in the sense of its legal impact, the possible impact it has had and could have on family members of our brave servicemen and -women who have made the ultimate sacrifice is significant enough that we should move to correct it quickly.

Under current law, the State Department waives passport fees for family members traveling abroad to official grave sites of armed servicemembers. However, the current law does not make a similar exception for family members traveling to attend a funeral or memorial service for a servicemember killed in action and then buried or memorialized overseas. S. 1184 would rightly extend this fee waiver to these families as well.

The ability to attend a funeral or memorial service for one who has paid the ultimate price in the service of our country is just as necessary an aspect of paying our final respects as being able to visit their grave.

Mr. Speaker, the logistical and financial burden imposed by these fees on grieving families can quickly build up. This small flaw in our current law has had large ramifications, and it does a disservice to the families of our fallen heroes and creates undue stress and pain that could easily be corrected.

Correcting this flaw would mean a great deal to those families who have given most. In this regard, I urge that S. 1184 be passed quickly and sent to the President for his signature.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation. This legislation, Mr. Speaker, represents a small, but important, change to existing law to help ease in one small way the suffering of U.S. citizens whose relatives have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, we are at war. Hundreds of thousands of Americans from both our regular forces and from the National Guard and Reserves have been deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries around the globe. Our

forces have been subject to more stress than any time since the Vietnam War when the United States had the draft.

The men and women who have performed so magnificently for their country deserve all the support we can give them, and their families deserve every possible relief we can give them as well.

The legislation before us today affords those families some relief at a time of unimaginable loss.

Many members of our Armed Forces have developed ties and families abroad, and a few of them are being buried at private cemeteries in foreign lands after making the ultimate sacrifice. At present, our law requires grieving parents, grandparents, and other relatives to pay nearly \$100 in first-time passport fees when all they want to do is to attend their family member's final honor. For a large family these costs can add up and for no good reason.

The legislation before us remedies this problem. It authorizes the Department of State to waive the passport fees in this situation, just as the Department is currently allowed to do when the family member is being buried in a U.S. military cemetery. It also extends the waiver to allow grandparents to be eligible for it.

Mr. Speaker, this is a problem that affects relatively few people. Indeed, the Congressional Budget Office has concluded that it would have no significant impact on the Federal budget; but when it does happen, it can be a godsend to those who have lost so much.

I commend my dear friend, the Senate sponsor of this legislation, Senator JOE BIDEN of Delaware, for introducing this humanitarian measure; and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of our men and women bravely serving in the Armed Forces—past, present, and future. As they fight the forces of terrorism around the globe we must seek to honor their sacrifices made to preserve our freedoms.

As we remember them on March 26, National Support the Troops Day, it is only fitting that we participate in a moment of silence to reflect on their service. Those currently serving in our Armed Forces are protecting liberty that was established by the Founding Fathers and has been preserved by our Nation's veterans. Soldiers, sailors, and airmen daily risk their lives fighting those who wish to enslave mankind to religious extremism, oppression, and tyranny.

Today I also rise in support of S. 1184, an effort to properly honor those whose loved ones have fallen in combat. It is the least we can do to waive passport fees for those who must travel overseas in order to visit the resting place of their relatives who have given the full measure of service. From the beaches of France to deserts of Africa, American soldiers have given their lives and been interred on foreign soil.

We are ever grateful for their sacrifice and this is but a small way we can now support their relatives.

Finally, recognizing that our military is dependent on a robust recruiting operation, I give my full support for H. Con. Res. 354. To preserve an all volunteer military service, it is essential that recruiters be granted access to the best and brightest American students. Service in the military is an honorable position and without our Armed Services, we would not have the academic freedoms that have made our Nation so advanced in culture and science.

I recently had the pleasure of recognizing New Jersey's Fifth District nominees to the U.S. Service Academies. Not all students have that honor, but all students should have the option of learning more about this noble profession from qualified Armed Forces recruiters.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1184.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION SHOULD FULLY PROTECT THE FREEDOMS OF ALL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES WITHOUT DISTINCTION

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 190) expressing the sense of the Congress that the Russian Federation should fully protect the freedoms of all religious communities without distinction, whether registered and unregistered, as stipulated by the Russian Constitution and international standards.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 190

Whereas the Russian Federation is a participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and has freely committed to fully respect the rights of individuals, whether alone or in community with others, to profess and practice religion or belief;

Whereas the Russian Federation specifically committed in the 1989 Vienna Concluding Document to "take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination against individuals or communities on the grounds of religion or belief" and to "grant upon their request to communities of believers, practicing or prepared to practice their faith within the constitutional framework of their States, recognition of the status provided for them in the respective countries";

Whereas Article 28 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation declares "everyone shall be guaranteed the right to freedom of conscience, to freedom of religious worship, including the right to profess, individually or jointly with others, any religion" and Article 8 of the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations provides

for registration for religious communities as "religious organizations," if they have at least 10 members and have operated within the Russian Federation with legal status for at least 15 years;

Whereas registration is critical for religious groups to fully enjoy their religious freedoms, as many rights and privileges afforded to religious communities in the Russian Federation are contingent on obtaining registration;

Whereas many religious groups refuse to seek registration on theological or other grounds, while other communities have been unjustly denied registration or had their registration improperly terminated by local authorities;

Whereas many of the unregistered communities in the Russian Federation today were never registered under the Soviet system because they refused to collaborate with that government's anti-religious policies and they are now experiencing renewed discrimination and repression from the authorities;

Whereas over the past 2 years there have been an estimated ten arson attacks on unregistered Protestant churches, with little or no effective response by law enforcement officials to bring the perpetrators to justice;

Whereas in some areas of the Russian Federation law enforcement personnel have carried out violent actions against believers from unregistered communities peacefully practicing their faith; and

Whereas the United States has sought to protect the fundamental and inalienable human right to seek, know, and serve God according to the dictates of one's own conscience, in accordance with the international agreements committing nations to respect individual freedom of thought, conscience, and belief: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that the United States should—

(1) urge the Russian Federation to ensure full protection of freedoms for all religious communities without distinction, whether registered and unregistered, and end the harassment of unregistered religious groups by the security apparatus and other government agencies;

(2) urge the Russian Federation to ensure that law enforcement officials vigorously investigate acts of violence against unregistered religious communities, as well as make certain that authorities are not complicit in such attacks;

(3) continue to raise concerns with the Government of the Russian Federation over violations of religious freedom, including those against unregistered religious communities, especially indigenous denominations not well known in the United States;

(4) ensure that United States Embassy officials engage local officials throughout the Russian Federation, especially when violations of freedom of religion occur, and undertake outreach activities to educate local officials about the rights of unregistered religious communities;

(5) urge both the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief to visit the Russian Federation and raise with federal and local officials concerns about the free practice of unregistered religious communities; and

(6) urge the Council of Europe and its member countries to raise with Russian Federation officials issues relating to freedom of religion, especially in light of the Russian Federation's responsibilities as President of the Council in 2006.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H. Con. Res. 190 expresses the sense of the Congress that the Russian Federation should fully protect the right of its people to worship and practice their faith as they see fit. This freedom is the right of all religious communities without distinction, whether registered or unregistered, and that is stipulated by the Russian Constitution and by international standards.

Yet I am sorry to report religious freedom for minority religious communities throughout the Russian Federation have been under growing pressure as local officials and government authorities continue to harass and limit the abilities of these groups to practice their faith freely.

As we learned at a recent Helsinki Commission hearing, instances of violence have become alarmingly common. Arson attacks against churches in Russia have occurred in several towns and cities with little or no police response.

In its 2005 International Religious Freedom Report, the State Department Office on International Religious Freedom notes: "Some Federal agencies and many local authorities continue to restrict the rights of various religious minorities. Moreover, contradictions between Federal and local laws and varying interpretations of the law provide regional officials with opportunities to restrict the activities of religious minorities. Many observers attribute discriminatory practices at the local level to the greater susceptibility of local governments than the Federal Government to discriminatory attitudes in lobbying by local majority religious groups. The government only occasionally intervenes to prevent or reverse discrimination at the local level."

Mr. Speaker, the internationally recognized expert on religious liberty in Russia, Larry Uzzell, has written: "Russia has now come to use as standard practice methods of religious repression that were applied only occasionally in the 1990s. Secular bureaucrats now typically refuse to authorize land transfers to Baptist churches and also forbid movie theaters or other public halls to sign rental contracts with them." As a result, as an example: "In Moscow City alone some 10 Baptist congregations have ceased to exist simply because they could not find places within which to worship."

I would just note parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Larry for his extraordinary work in bringing this matter to the attention of the Congress. Larry is a tireless advocate for oppressed believers throughout Russia